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are the manufacturing difficulties associated with building a hydrogen fuel cell? For complicated questions such as this, it is worth looking at Google Answers, found in the Tools section of the website.

After signing up for the service (if you already have a Gmail account, you can use the same login information) you can start asking questions. There is a listing fee of \$0.50 (around 30p) for each question, and a minimum charge of \$2 (just over a £1) once the question is answered. The charging system works by setting a maximum amount that you are willing to pay to have your question answered, and you can increase it at any time. If you have set a low price limit and the question is simple, it should be answered quickly by Google's team of researchers. If your question is complicated and requires a long answer, you have to raise the payment to ensure your question is answered quickly or at all.

Aside from the initial \$0.50, you aren't charged until the question itself has been answered. Even though the site lists only prices in dollars, many countries around the world, including the UK, can use the service. Once your question has been answered, it is archived in the Answers database, which anyone can search for free.

ON THE MOVE

The internet is a vast repository of information that you can use to find out almost anything, but it is no good when you are nowhere near a computer and you desperately need to find out who won the FA cup in 1958, or how many countries there were in the USSR. Smartphone users have always been able to access the full version of Google, but the site didn't work properly on a phone's smaller screen. Google recently launched Google Mobile, a version of the Google website formatted specifically for mobile browsers.

The site will work on any mobile that supports WAP 2.0, which includes most modern phones; just type www.google.co.uk into your phone's browser. The results displayed are the same as those from the main site, but there are fewer sponsored links so you don't have to scroll too far down the page to find the information you're after. Running a search is as fast as using a dial-up modem, and you can even search for images to settle that long-running debate: is it a moose or an elk?

However, even though Google has formatted its site to fit nicely on a mobile's screen, this doesn't mean all the sites in its results list will

be as cooperative. Most websites are hard, if not impossible, to view on a mobile, so Google has compiled an index of mobile websites that can be searched with the Mobile Web search option. The results displayed are all WAP sites, so they will always be designed specifically for a mobile.

Aside from looking up trivia on the go, Google can also be used out and about when shopping, sightseeing or socialising. High street prices, particularly for electronic goods, can often be similar across all the major high street chains. How does the discerning shopper know if they are being ripped off and if they would be better off shopping online? Asking to use the manager's internet connection is often frowned upon, but if you point any phone that supports WAP 1.1 or later to <http://wml.froogle.co.uk> you can search online shops for the best price available. The WAP site is more limited than the full internet version of Froogle, as there are no pictures or links to the shops mentioned, but it works well as a price guide on the high street.

At some point, most of us have been lost in an unfamiliar town with an urgent need to find a pub, an Italian restaurant or a shop that sells obscure foreign literature. Internet cafés and tourist information shops aren't always easy to find, but your trusty mobile can get you out of a tight spot. Go to www.google.co.uk in your phone's browser and select the Local option, and type in your search criteria (Italian restaurant, foreign language bookshop, and so on) and the postcode or street. Google then returns a list of establishments in your area, starting with the closest to your current position. You can click on a link for each result to display a map, and even request driving directions.

STREETS AHEAD

Google Earth is a standalone application that provides stunning satellite views of the entire world's surface, but before you can use it you need to download and install a separate application. Google Maps is Earth's little brother, and offers the same satellite imagery but with normal maps and improved postcode support and driving directions through your standard browser. Only the US, UK and Ireland are currently covered at <http://maps.google.com> and <http://maps.google.co.uk>, but the maps are far easier to use and clearer than Google's mapping rivals.

The main screen at <http://maps.google.co.uk> shows the whole of the UK and Ireland. If you are

feeling adventurous, you can zoom in and find your location manually. There is also a search box that accepts road or place names and postcodes. Once you're zoomed in, the maps are very clear. Google Maps' chief advantage over its rivals at www.streetmap.co.uk and www.multimap.co.uk is the ease with which you can scroll around the map; simply click and drag in the direction you want to move and the map updates automatically, making it much easier than the complicated direction arrows of most online mapping services. You can also overlay satellite images on the map, and get driving directions between places or postcodes.

INTEGRATED SEARCHING

Google's main search engine does a decent job of indexing the unfathomable amount of information on the internet, but since modern computers are used for everything from word processing to playing music and video files it can be tricky to keep track of all the content on your PC. Windows has a built-in search engine and Outlook lets you search through your emails, but using several different programs can be cumbersome.

Google Desktop Search puts all these search functions in one place. When you first install the software, it indexes everything on your computer's hard drive, including all the email messages in Outlook and any email messages in your Gmail account. The basic version runs unobtrusively in the background, and the only difference you will see is the addition of a Desktop link on Google's home page. As the Desktop Search software has already indexed your computer, searches are instantaneous. Results are displayed as links to the files and their parent folder. Anyone familiar with Gmail's bulletin-board style of organising emails will appreciate how Desktop Search organises Outlook emails – they are arranged in conversation threads, so it is easy to keep track of entire email conversations.

An optional extra is the sidebar. This is a quick reference tool that lets you keep track of any new mail in your Gmail inbox, as well as the latest news as soon as it arrives, thanks to a feed from Google News. You can customise each section of the sidebar, so if you prefer your news from Argentina rather than the UK you can change the feed accordingly. The sidebar also keeps track of your preferences, so if you are sick of hearing about every new iPod launch you can select 'Don't show me items like this' to avoid such stories. **CS**

SUMS IT UP

Not many people know that the standard Google search box can be used as a calculator with many scientific functions, or as a units conversion tool. It is useful for simple calculations such as 499×1.175 , and will also simplify the process with complicated

maths involving strings of calculations. Working out $7 + 3 \times 8 / 7$ is tricky on a normal calculator, but Google automatically adds the appropriate brackets to give $7 + ((3 \times 8) / 7)$. A full list of calculation operators can be found at www.google.com/help/calculator.html.

Google also automatically converts units for you. If you want to convert 10.5 stones to kilograms, type "10.5 stones in kilograms" and Google will calculate the result. It is lenient in interpreting your requests, so it recognises kilos as kilograms and degrees c as degrees Celsius.

Web Images Groups News Froogle

10.5 stones in kilos

Search: ☒ the web ☐ pages from the UK

Web

10.5 stones = 66.6780784 kilograms

Google will perform weight conversions...

Web Images Groups News Froogle

499 * 1.175

Search: ☒ the web ☐ pages from the UK

Web

499 * 1.17500 = 586.32500

...as well as any sum you can think of...

Web Images Groups News Froogle

7 + (3 * 8) / 7

Search: ☒ the web ☐ pages from the UK

Web

7 + ((3 * 8) / 7) = 10.4285714

...including complicated equations